

CLAIMS:

1. In an externally modulated wavelength division multiplexed (WDM) optical transmitter comprising a continuous wave (CW) laser, a semiconductor optical amplifier (SOA) positioned after the laser and an external modulator positioned after the SOA, a method of controlling start-up of the transmitter comprising the steps:

- maintaining the laser in a disabled (off) mode;
- operating the SOA so as to generate a broad spectrum of amplified spontaneous emission (ASE) light output;
- biasing the modulator substantially to a modulator minimum transmission state;
- turning off the SOA; and
- turning on the laser.

2. A method according to claim 1 wherein the step of biasing the modulator substantially to a modulator minimum transmission state comprises:

- sweeping the modulator over a range of bias voltages and monitoring the modulator output power to determine the bias voltage vs. transmission characteristic of the modulator; and
- biasing the modulator to a minimum transmission state as determined by the preceding step.

3. A method according to claim 2 wherein monitoring of the modulator output power is carried out by a transmitter power monitor photodiode positioned after the external modulator.

9. A method according to claim 8 wherein the step of biasing the modulator substantially to a modulator minimum transmission state comprises:

sweeping the modulator over a range of bias voltages and monitoring the modulator output power to determine the bias voltage vs. transmission characteristic of the modulator; and

biasing the modulator to a minimum transmission state as determined by the preceding step.

10. A method according to claim 9 wherein monitoring of the modulator output power is carried out by a transmitter power monitor photodiode positioned after the external modulator.

11. A method according to claim 8 wherein the SOA is integrated onto the same substrate as the CW laser.

12. A method according to claim 8 wherein the external modulator is a Mach-Zehnder interferometer modulator.

13. A method according to claim 8 wherein the Mach-Zehnder interferometer modulator is formed from lithium niobate (LiNbO_3) crystal.

14. A method according to claim 8 wherein the continuous wave (CW) laser is a tunable laser.

15. A computer readable storage medium having computer readable program code means embodied therein for controlling the start-up of an externally modulated WDM optical transmitter, said optical transmitter comprising a CW laser, a semiconductor optical amplifier (SOA) positioned after the CW laser, an external modulator positioned after the SOA, the computer readable program code means comprising:

computer readable program code means for biasing the modulator substantially to a modulator minimum transmission state;

10 computer readable program code means for turning on
the laser.

computer readable/program code means for sweeping the
15 modulator over a range of bias voltages;

computer readable program code means for biasing the
20 modulator to a minimum transmission state as determined by the
preceding step.

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computer readable program code means for disabling data modulation;

computer readable program code means for turning down the SOA to a minimum power so as to still maintain a wavelength
5 lock;

computer readable program code means for biasing the modulator substantially to a modulator minimum transmission state;

computer readable program code means for turning off
10 the SOA;

computer readable program code means for setting the laser temperature and SOA temperature to values corresponding to the desired wavelength; and

computer readable program code means for adjusting
15 the laser bias current to a value corresponding to the desired wavelength.

18. In an externally modulated wavelength division multiplexed (WDM) optical transmitter comprising a continuous wave (CW) laser, a semiconductor optical amplifier (SOA)
20 positioned after the laser and an external modulator positioned after the SOA, a method of tuning the transmitter to a desired wavelength comprising the steps:

turning the laser off;

25 setting the laser temperature and SOA temperature to values corresponding to the desired wavelength;

operating the SOA so as to generate a broad spectrum of amplified spontaneous emission (ASE) light output;

turning on the laser.

20. An externally modulated wavelength division
25 multiplexed (WDM) optical transmitter comprising a continuous
wave (CW) laser, a semiconductor optical amplifier (SOA)
positioned after the laser and an external modulator positioned

after the SOA, the SOA gain being adjustable so as to provide control of the optical output power of the transmitter.

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